*The Reasonableness of Believing without Seeing.*

A

# SERMON

Preach'd before the

# KING

IN

## St. *James*'s Chappel,

On *Palm-Sunday*, MARCH 24. $1\frac{699}{700}$.

By the Most Reverend Father in God,
*JOHN* Lord Archbishop of *YORK*.

**Publish'd by His Majesty's Special Command.**

*LONDON:*
Printed for *Walter Kettilby*, at the *Bishop's-Head* in St. *Paul's* Church-Yard: And *William Rogers*, at the *Sun* against St. *Dunstan's* Church in *Fleetstreet*. 1700.

The Archbiſhop of *YORK*'s

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# St. John XX. 29.

*----Bleſſed are they that have not ſeen, and yet have believed.*

THESE are our Saviour's Words to St. *Thomas* after his Reſurrection. The occaſion of them was this: The other Diſciples had aſſured *Thomas*, That our Saviour was riſen from the dead, and that he had in Perſon appeared to them. *Thomas* would not believe this upon their report, but required farther Evidence. *Except (ſaith he) I ſhall ſee in his hands the print of the nails, and thruſt my hand into his ſide, I will not believe.* The next time that our Saviour appeared to them, *Thomas* was in the Company, and then he was pleaſed to give him ſuch a Proof of his Reſurrection as he himſelf had ſtood upon; for he calls upon him, and bids him *reach forth his finger, and behold his hands* where the Print of the Nails was, *and reach forth his hand, and thruſt it into his ſide*, and after this, *not to be faithleſs, but believing*. Hereupon

*Thomas* owns himself fully convinced, and in token thereof, *he answered and said unto him, My Lord, and my God.* Then come in the Words of the Text: *Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

In which Words, as our Saviour tacitly reproves *Thomas* for his Incredulity, in not believing a matter of Fact well attested, unless he himself saw it: So he lays down an universal Proposition for the Encouragement of all Mankind in future Ages of the world, to *believe* in him, though they had not *seen* him.

Our Saviour knew very well, that this was to be the Case of far the greatest part that were to believe in him. For it was only to the men of that Age in which he lived, and of that Country where he conversed, to whom it was given to hear from his own mouth his Divine Doctrines, and to see with their eyes the Proofs that he gave of his Divine Mission, particularly that illustrious one of his Resurrection from the dead. But for all the succeeding Generations of men, they were to *believe* without *seeing*. Their Faith was not to be grounded on the Evidence of their own Senses, but on the Testimony of those that had had that Evidence. And therefore for the obli-

obliging and encouraging all Mankind, in the Ages to come, to Embrace his Religion upon ſuch Motives and ſuch Evidence as this, he pronounceth theſe words, *Bleſſed are they that have not ſeen, and yet have believed.*

I doubt not but that all Chriſtians are fully ſatisfied both of the Truth and Reaſon of this Propoſition of our Saviour, and are convinced that they have Motives enow to oblige them to believe in him, and to own his Religion; though they never ſaw, nor were capable of ſeeing the Original Proofs and Evidence he gave for the Truth of it. Indeed if it were otherwiſe, none of us at this day could be Chriſtians upon rational Grounds. But this Doctrine will not paſs among all men. On the contrary, By ſeveral, Their not *Seeing*, is made the great, if not the only pretence, for their not *Believing*. This being ſo; I hope it will not be time miſ-ſpent, if I endeavour to anſwer this Plea of theirs; and I think I cannot to better purpoſe diſcourſe upon this Text, than by doing ſo.

The Caſe is this. Some there are among us that endeavour to run down all *Reveal'd Religion*. If you ask them whether then they are for any Religion at all; They will tell you, Yes, they are for that which *Natural Reaſon* teacheth. We wiſh they

they were in good earneſt when they ſay this. For then we ſhould hope to be ſoon all of a mind. For we cannot doubt but that whoſoever doth ſincerely believe all that *Natural Reaſon* will teach him about Religion, and doth ſeriouſly endeavour to frame his Life accordingly; ſuch a one will not fail to embrace *Chriſtianity*, whenever the Doctrines of our Saviour, and the Proofs he gave for the Truth of them, are fairly repreſented to him. But in truth, theſe mens looſe way, both of diſcourſing, and of living, renders it ſuſpicious, that their Profeſſion of *Natural Religion* is not very ſincere; but only for the ſheltering them from the Imputation of Atheiſm, and ſerving other ſecular ends. For ſuch a *Scheme* of *Natural Religion* have they framed to themſelves, as will not much trouble their Conſciences, let them *live* how they will. But now the *Chriſtian* Religion (which is that they chiefly oppoſe under the name of *Revealed Religion*) is a more Stubborn thing, and will not ſo eaſily be brought to Comply with their Humours and Inclinations. And *That* we fear, though they are loth to own it, is the ſecret reaſon of their Grudge againſt it. The Goſpel of Chriſt doth not favour ſuch ſort of Principles as theſe men have taken up, nor ſuch a kind of Life

Life as they are engaged in; But on the contrary, ſeverely declares againſt them. And therefore ſome colourable Reaſon muſt be found out, for the ſetting aſide the Authority of this Goſpel, which is ſo contradictory to their *Intereſts*. But how is this to be come by?

To object againſt the Sufficiency of the Proof that our Saviour gave to the world of his being ſent from God to teach this Religion to Mankind, That there is no colour for: For they are ſenſible that if his Hiſtory, as it is related in the Goſpel, be admitted to be a true Hiſtory, ſo that one may depend upon the Matters of Fact there Recorded concerning him: If this, I ſay, be admitted, it cannot be denied but that our Saviour gave abundant Evidence, that he was what he pretended to be, the Son of God, and the great Prophet whom all men were to be obedient to, if they meant to be ſaved.

Since therefore they cannot faſten upon this, they pitch upon another Method. They endeavour to run down all our Evidence for the Truth of Chriſt's Religion, by making a Difference between *ſeeing* our Saviour's Miracles, and *reading* them in a Book. They will allow, that if any man heard or ſaw Jeſus Chriſt ſpeaking thoſe things, or doing thoſe things, which are

Recorded of him; such a man would have sufficient Reason to induce him to be his Disciple: But they deny that they have any such Reason to be so, because they neither *heard* nor *saw* any of those things; nor are they convinced that such things were ever done. They reproach us, that when they desire of us a Proof of the Christian Religion, all the Answer they can obtain of us is, that they must go to such a Book (which we call the Bible) and that will satisfy them. But why should they pin their Faith upon any Book in the world? This is what they urge for their Infidelity.

This now being the State of the Controversy between Us and several of the Unbelievers among us, you see it turns upon this single Point that is now before us; namely, Whether a man that does not *see*, may not have sufficient Reason to *believe* at many hundred years distance? Or more particularly thus; Whether we in these days, who never *saw* our Saviour, nor his Miracles, (particularly That of his *Resurrection*, with Reference to which these words were spoken) have not abundant Reason to believe in him, upon the Testimony of those that did see all these things. We say we have. They say we have not. Here therefore we join Issue.

Now

Now for the making good our ſide of the Queſtion, I proceed by theſe Steps.

In the *firſt* place, We lay it down as a Principle, and I ſuppoſe every body will agree to it; That if *Jeſus Chriſt* and his Apoſtles, when they firſt Preached the Goſpel, did give ſufficient Proof and Evidence that what they Preached was from God: And likewiſe if both the Doctrine they Preached, and the Proof and Evidence they gave for it, be faithfully tranſmitted to us; and with ſuch Certainty likewiſe, that we cannot have any reaſonable doubt that it is ſo tranſmitted: Then I ſay, we can have no reaſon in the earth to complain, that we want Evidence for the Truth of the Goſpel. I do not ſay *yet*, that we have as ſtrong Proof, as if we had ſeen or heard thoſe things our ſelves: But I ſay we have ſufficient Proof to convince any reaſonable unbiaſſed man: This I preſume no body will deny, and it is all that we ask at preſent. I.

In the *Second* place; I believe none will deny, that what was once really ſpoken, or what was once really done, may be truly and faithfully put into writing. And it is poſſible likewiſe that thoſe Writings may come ſo well atteſted, to them that live many Ages after thoſe things were ſpoken, or done, that none in any Age can rea- II.

ſonably doubt that they give a true and faithful account of the things therein reported to be done or taught. I ſay, I believe none will deny this; for if it be not admitted, we can give no Credit to any Hiſtory that was written; nor conſequently to any Matter of Fact that was done in former Ages. It therefore will, I hope, be granted, that both the Doctrines of our Saviour, and his Proofs of them, might in this way, if God ſo pleaſed, be ſo faithfully tranſmitted to Poſterity, that future Ages might certainly come to the knowledge of them.

III. In the *Third* place we ſay, That it is obvious to all Mankind, that if ever there was any Affair in the world, wherein the Providence of God was concerned, that there ſhould be a faithful Conveyance of it made to all Generations to come, and carrying the Marks of its own Credibility; this Affair of the Goſpel of Chriſt was ſuch a one. Becauſe the Importance of it to all the Children of men was ſuch, that their Salvation or Damnation to the end of the world, did depend upon the Belief of it, if the Author of this Goſpel delivered a true Doctrine. And therefore we may certainly conclude, that if what Chriſt taught at the firſt, was from God; God would take care that what he taught, together

ther with ſufficient Proof of the Truth of it, ſhould be conveyed to all the Ages of the world. And if all this was to be contained in a Book; we may likewiſe be aſſured, that Book ſhould come to us, with ſuch Evidence of its being true, that we could have no reaſonable Suſpicion concerning it. We are ſure God's Providence hath taken care that Writings of an Ancienter Date than the Goſpel, that are of infinitely leſs conſequence to Mankind, ſhould come down to us without any Suſpicion of Impoſture: And can it be imagined then, his Providence ſhould be unconcerned, in preſerving and bringing ſafe to our hands, the Records of a thing, by the Belief or Denial of which, the Eternal State of men in the other world is to be concluded?

In the *Fourth* place, having laid theſe Foundations, we advance a Step higher. It is certain, that there was a timely and a faithful Record of all the things that *Jeſus Chriſt* taught in order to Salvation, and of all the Proofs he gave for the Truth and Divinity of his Doctrine: And this Record is contained in the Books of the New Teſtament. IV.

That this is true Matter of Fact, we have all the Proof that a thing of this Nature is capable of.

of. Theſe Books were written either by men that were *Eye* and *Ear* Witneſſes of our Saviour's Miracles, and Doctrine, and Converſation: Or by ſuch as Converſed with thoſe that were. This appears not only from the Writings themſelves, which carry in them all the Marks of their being written by Perſons ſo qualified; but alſo from the conſtant Tradition that hath in all Ages gone in the world, about the Authors of theſe Writings. And you may with as much, or more reaſon doubt, that thoſe Writings among us, which go under the Name of *Cicero*, or *Cæſar*, or *Seneca*; or any other moſt unqueſtioned Author, were none of Theirs, but forged ſince their times; than you can doubt that the Goſpels of St. *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *John*, and *Luke*'s both Goſpel and Acts of the Apoſtles, and St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles, were not writ by thoſe Authors, or in the Age they pretend to be. I ſay, there is a great deal more reaſon to doubt of that, than there is of this: Becauſe we have not only all the Proofs of the Genuineneſs of thoſe Writings, that can be given for any other Writings, which are the moſt unqueſtioned in the world; but this over and above, which is compatible to none but theſe; namely, That the Matter of theſe Writings is of ſuch a Nature, that all Mankind were

were concerned to detect the Fraud and the Forgery of them, if there had been any: But yet they have always paſſed under the Names they bear at this day; nay, and in every Age, from the firſt publiſhing of them, we have Authentick Authorities in a continued Succeſſion to vouch for them.

V. Well, but ſuppoſing theſe men to be the Authors of theſe Writings; yet how can we depend upon the Truth of what they have Reported?

In anſwer to this, I ſay in the *Fifth* place; Let any man read them, and then ſpeak from his Conſcience, Whether he does not think that theſe men were in good earneſt, and did really write according to their own inward ſenſe? And yet the Matters they wrote were ſuch, as it was not poſſible they could be deceived about them; becauſe they were all plain Matters of Fact; things which their *Eyes* and *Ears* were witneſſes of. But that is not all: They who lived in thoſe days, and had full opportunities of examining the Truth of what they had written, gave Teſtimony to them; ſince they built their Faith upon the Matters of Fact they had delivered. If therefore you ſuppoſe theſe Writers to be ſincere honeſt men, it is certain that what they recorded concerning our Lord Jeſus, and his Doctrines, and

and his Actions, muſt be true. On the other ſide, if you ſuppoſe them to have had Deſigns of impoſing upon the world with a falſe Story; you muſt at the ſame time ſuppoſe a great number of People (of whom there is no ground for ſuch a ſuſpicion) to be perfect Fools or Madmen, who gave ſo much Credit to all that matter which they related concerning our Saviour, that they laid down their Lives to atteſt the Truth of it.

I know nothing to be ſaid againſt this, unleſs it be, That though they could not well be ſuppoſed to be miſtaken in the Matters of Fact which they relate concerning our Saviour, yet they might in the Matter of his *Doctrines*. Theſe they might miſrepreſent, and conſequently their Writings ought not to be of that Authority with us, as that we ſhould be bound to believe all that they ſay. But to this I give a very ſhort Anſwer; If we do admit them to be true Reporters of Matters of *Fact*, we muſt alſo of neceſſity admit them to be true Reporters, nay I ſay more, Infallible Reporters of our Saviour's *Doctrine*; ſo as that their Declarations of it muſt for ever conclude all Chriſtians. And the reaſon is this: The Authors of theſe Writings were either Apoſtles, or Apoſtolick Men, as has been

ſaid

ſaid before; and it is one of the matters of *Fact* reported in theſe Writings, that our Saviour did ſo aſſiſt theſe men with his Holy Spirit, that they were enabled faithfully and infallibly to Preach that Doctrine to others which he had delivered to them. Now if we be ſure they were inſpired in what they *Preached*; we may be as much aſſured they were inſpired in *putting* what they Preached into *writing*; ſince it was the ſame Doctrine that they *Preached* and that they *Wrote*; and eſpecially ſince after it was written it was to remain to all ſucceeding Generations, and to be a *Rule* of mens *Faith* ſo long as the world ſhould laſt. And further, we are ſure that all the Chriſtians of thoſe days did look upon thoſe Writings to have a ſtamp of divine Authority upon them, and diſtinguiſhed them from all other human Compoſitions. And to Evidence this, they made theſe Writings to be the Standard of their Belief; the *Meaſure* by which they tryed all *Opinions* and *Doctrines* in Religion: So that whatever was not found in theſe Scriptures, was not accounted as neceſſary to Salvation; and whatever was found diſagreeing from theſe Scriptures, was rejected as an Innovation, or an Error in Chriſtianity. And of this we have ſufficient Evidence from Antiquity.

Well, but how ſhall we know whether theſe VI.

Scriptures be faithfully transmitted down to us? How do we know but that they may have been corrupted since the time they were written, and made to speak different things now, from what they did at the first? This is the last Question upon this Argument; and in Answer to it, I say in the *Sixth* Place;

If the Providence of God, as I told you before, was ever concerned to preserve any Writings from being depraved or corrupted; it was certainly more especially concerned to do it, as to the Writings we are now speaking of, they being of such vast Importance to all the Generations of Mankind. But I do not leave the matter so. There is Evidence of *Fact* as well as *Reason* to be offered in this Case.

Let the Books of the New Testament, as we now have them, be tryed by the severest Rules of Criticism. Let the *Copies* both Ancient and Modern, which are extant of them, be compared. Let the several *Versions* of them likewise that were made in the earliest times be examined. Lastly; Let all the *Ecclesiastical* Writers from the beginning of Christianity to this day, who have either commented upon them; or proved any Doctrine from them; or but occasionally quoted them in their Writings, be searched into: It will appear by all these ways of Tryal, that our Scriptures

tures are the ſame at this day, that they were at the beginning, without any material difference.

Indeed, conſidering the multitude of Copies that were taken of theſe Books, and the ſeveral Tranſlations that were made of them into other Languages, even ſhortly after the time they were firſt publiſhed; we cannot imagine it poſſible, that in After-ages, any thing could be foiſted into them, to ſerve the Turn of any *Party*, but the Impoſture would have been preſently diſcovered. And accordingly we find, that when any Attempts of this kind have been made, there were not wanting thoſe who took care to detect and expoſe them.

I do not, when I ſay this, deny that there are many differences and *various readings* to be met with, in the ancient Copies of theſe Books, occaſioned by the negligence or miſtakes of Tranſcribers. Nay, and ſome few Paſſages may be wanting in ſome Copies that are found in others: But then I deſire it may be obſerved that theſe differences are of ſuch ſmall moment, that it is of no Importance to the Chriſtian Faith, which of the Readings be right, and which of them be wrong. For they all agree in all the Matters which concern either our Saviour's *Doctrines*, or his *Precepts*, or the *Proofs* he gave of his Divine Miſſion. And farther agreement than this I think none needs to deſire.

Indeed if slight and *verbal* differences in Copies be a good Argument against the Genuineness of a Writing; we have no Genuine Writing of any ancient Author at this day. For the same thing has happened to all old Books whatsoever, that have been often transcribed: And to suppose, that it should be otherwise in the Books of the Scripture, is to suppose, that God ought in every age, as immediately and infallibly to guide the *Pen* of every Transcriber of them, as he did the *Minds* of their first Authors.

To make now a little Reflection on what I have said about the Scriptures of the New Testament. It is urged by our Deists, as a very hard thing, That whereas, when the Gospel was first preached, men had opportunities of being convinced by their senses of the Truth of it; (or at least it is pretended they had such Opportunities) we now are only referred to a Book that gives us an account of these matters: Why, I desire to know, what other way they would have had an account of them but by Books? Would they have had our Saviour to come down from Heaven every *Fifty* or *Threescore* years, and to Preach the same Doctrine; and Confirm it by the same Miracles to the men of that Generation, that he once did among the *Jews*? Yet this it must be supposed necessary for him

him to do, if Men cannot otherwiſe be convinced of the Truth of his Religion, but by their Senſes. Nay, that would not be enough: He muſt not only publiſh his Doctrine, and repeat his Miracles to every *Age*, but to every individual *Man* of every *Age*: Otherwiſe *All* Men had not opportunity of being convinced by their *Senſes*, and conſequently could not upon reaſonable grounds believe in him. But if this Suppoſition be abſurd, as it certainly is; then we muſt be content (and there is all the reaſon in the world we ſhould be ſo) with that ſort of Evidence for the Truth of his Goſpel, that other Matters of Fact, done at a great diſtance of time from us, are capable of: That is to ſay, Authentick Witneſſes of them at the firſt; and the Teſtimony of thoſe Witneſſes faithfully tranſmitted down to Poſterity. And how any Teſtimony can be more faithfully tranſmitted, than by the way of Writing, let them ſhew us, if they can.

And then, as for the Books or Writings that we refer you to in this Caſe, we ask no more for the gaining Credit to them, than only that it may be ſeriouſly conſidered, of what ſort they are, and what Authority they carry along with them.

We do not ſend you to *Herodotus*, and *Pliny*, or ſuch like Writers; who, though they were very good Authors, yet took a great deal of what they ſaid, from uncertain Reports. Much

Much less do we send you to a *Golden Legend*, or the Lives of the Saints, as they have been written of later days, by Men who took advantage of the Ignorance and Credulity of the Age they liv'd in, to obtrude what they pleased upon the World.

But we send you to Authors who themselves knew, and were Witnesses of what they wrote.

Who gave all possible proof of their Sincerity and Integrity, not only by publickly, in all places, asserting the Truth of what they had written, but some of them also sealing it with their Blood.

Who were so assisted with the Divine Spirit, that they themselves wrought the same Miracles, for the confirmation of Christ's Doctrine, that they had recorded him to have done.

And lastly, Who in all succeeding Ages were had in such veneration among Christians, that their Writings were esteemed the Platform and Standard of True Faith: And upon which they set so high a value, that they would keep them at the Peril of their Lives. And Instances we have of Multitudes, who rather chose Torments and Death, than they would deliver up their Bibles.

Taking now all this together, can any thing like it be said for the Truth or the Authority of any other Book in the world?

VII. But this is not all. I desire in the *Seventh* and last place, it may be considered; That we do not

not ſend you to a bare Book for the Proof of the Chriſtian Religion, how much ſoever that Book may have the Marks, not only of a True and Genuine, but alſo of a Divine Hiſtory. But we inſiſt upon a great many other things for the Proof of the Matters contained in that Book, beſides the Authority of the Book it ſelf.

If indeed nothing had followed upon Chriſt's publiſhing his Goſpel, and we had never heard more of it, or him, ſave what we might happen to meet with in thoſe Old Writings; I do not know how far their Evidence alone, now at the diſtance of near Seventeen hundred Years, would have prevailed with us to embrace his Religion: But now when we ſee and are convinced, that ſo many remarkable Effects enſued upon his Preaching in the world, and ſtill continue viſible at this day; which yet cannot be aſcribed to any other cauſe, than to the particular Power and Providence of God, which was concerned to juſtify our Saviour, and his Pretenſions to the world: This is certainly a new Evidence, and a ſtanding one, both for that *Book* which mentions all theſe things, and eſpecially for that *Cauſe* it maintains.

The Caſe of the Chriſtian Religion is plainly this. *Jeſus Chriſt*, a mean Perſon as to his outward Circumſtances, ſets up for a Preacher of a new Religion. And this, not in the times of Igno-

Ignorance, and Barbarism (when an Imposture might be supposed more easy to be carried on, and which Advantages *Mahomet* afterwards made use of) but in the Reign of *Augustus Cæsar*, when Learning, and Arts, and Sciences were in the most flourishing Condition, that ever they were known to be.

He chuses a Company of very ordinary *Unlettered* Men, but very *Honest* Men, to be the Witnesses of his Conversation and Doctrine. And these he designs for the Spreaders of his Religion throughout the World.

He neither makes use of Arts, nor Arms for the gaining Disciples to himself: only declares plainly, that he is the Person, whom God had long before promised to send, and whom he did now send, to publish Eternal Salvation to all that should believe in him.

The Religion which he taught, and which all his Followers were to take upon them, was so far from gratifying *Flesh* and *Blood*, that it seemed much better contrived, as the World then stood, for the frighting men from it, than for the alluring Proselytes to it.

For there was nothing in it that ministred to any sensual or worldly purposes; nothing that tended to make a man either wise, or rich, or great, or happy, in the sense of this world; but all the quite contrary. He that would be his

his Diſciple, muſt quit all the popular Notions about Happineſs. Inſtead of being thought wiſe, muſt ſubmit to be counted a Fool for Chriſt's ſake. Inſtead of getting Wealth, or Honour, or Preferment, muſt be prepared to part with all theſe things, if he was already poſſeſſed of them; muſt deny himſelf, and all his Temporal Intereſts; nay muſt forſake Father and Mother, and his own Life alſo, whenever he was called to it. The way to Heaven, as he taught it, was by Humility and Meekneſs, and Contempt of the World, and all the Glories of it; by patient ſuffering Afflictions and Injuries, and an abſolute Reſignation of our ſelves to God, to do and ſuffer whatever was his Will. And he himſelf, as he lived thus, ſo did he thus go off the Stage; being after Three Years preaching this ſort of Doctrine, hanged up on a Croſs, as an Impoſtor, and that by the Vote of his own Countrymen.

Where now was the temptation to the generality of men, to own this Man as a Prophet ſent from God to Mankind? Why, in truth, by what I have yet repreſented, there was very little: Nay indeed, to any one that conſiders theſe beginnings of the Goſpel, it will be matter of Aſtoniſhment that any more came of it, and that it did not preſently dye with the Author of it.

But here was the thing. Our Lord, in how poor a Condition ſoever he lived, yet he *ſpake as never man*

*spake*. He so explained the Old Scriptures which foretold of him: He taught such Important Truths concerning another Life; concerning the Nature and Providence of God, and his Mercy to lost Mankind, and the way in which he would be served, and in what sort of things it was, that true Religion did consist, that he pierced the very Souls of those that heard him. There was so much Evidence in the Truths themselves that he delivered, that no honest virtuously-disposed Minds could stand out against them, but must be convinced in their own Consciences, that this, of all that they had ever heard of, was a Religion worthiest to come from God, and most accommodated to the *Spiritual* Needs of men; nay, and their *Temporal* ones too, supposing that all men would embrace it.

And then the whole Tenor of his Life was suitable hereunto: For he appeared in all his Actions and Conversation, to be a Man of so much Candor and Goodness, and Clearness of Spirit; so Humble, so Just, so Prudent, so Charitable, so Obliging to all Mankind; so full of Piety and Devotion, and Resignation to God; and lastly, so free from all suspicion that he carried on any selfish Designs; that all these Heavenly Doctrines came better out of his Mouth, than if any other had delivered them.

But that which crowned all was this; that throughout the whole Stage of his Life there was a visible Evi-

Evidence of a Divine Power and Preſence going along with him, which ſhewed it ſelf in a thouſand Inſtances of the moſt glorious Miracles that ever were ſeen or heard of in the world, and that to the Amazement of the whole Country where he lived.

In this manner, I ſay, did our Saviour lay the Foundation for a Belief of his Doctrine, to all ſucceeding Generations; and a ſolid unſhaken Foundation it was.

But yet for all that, if the Power of God had ſtopped here, I do not know what Superſtructure would ever have been made upon this Foundation.

For ſo it was, that thoſe very men, thoſe honeſt plain-hearted men that he had taken into his Family, to be Witneſſes of what he did and taught, with a deſign, as I told you, of ſending them abroad to publiſh all thoſe things throughout the World; yet when he came to dye, ſuch poor-ſpirited Creatures they proved, that every man of them forſook him.

O ſad Example of human Frailty and Inconſtancy! thoſe men that had the greateſt opportunities of knowing him and his Doctrine, and had profeſſed the moſt firm Reſolutions of adhering to him; yet all forſook him in the hour of danger, and ſhifted for themſelves.

But God Almighty, tho he ſuffered good men to act as men, did not therefore lay aſide that great Deſign he had ſet on foot by our Lord Jeſus; no, nor

of accomplishing it by the Ministry of these very men.

For he raised up his Son from the dead on the Third Day (as our Saviour had before told them he would); and this put new Life and Spirit into those Persons that had lately abandoned him.

But that was not all. Our Saviour calls them all together after he was thus risen from the dead. He acquaints them with the Work that he had committed to them. He assures them that he will be with them, and those that should succeed them in that Ministry for ever. Not in Person, for he was to continue in Heaven to intercede for all Believers at the Right Hand of God; but by the Virtue and Presence of the Holy Spirit, who was to be his Deputy and Vicegerent upon Earth. This Holy Spirit he would in a few days send down upon them, who should effectually furnish and endue them with all Powers, and Qualities, and Abilities, needful for the discharge of so great a Work, as the Conversion of the World to his Religion, was. And after he had told them these things, he visibly in their Presence ascended up into Heaven.

Here now begins Christ's Kingdom. He had conquered *Death* before, and now he comes to conquer the *Devil* and the *World*. From henceforward you hear of no Fear, no Pusillanimity, no mean Behaviour in any of the Apostles. They then go and Preach to all the World that Gospel which their Master ordered

ed them. No Danger frights them: No human Learning or Philoſophy is able to ſtand before them. The greateſt Obſtacles, the greateſt Terrors that come in their way, are ſo far from making them quit the Work they had begun; that they rather prove Incentives to them to go on in it. They make it their buſineſs to gain Souls in every place to Jeſus Chriſt: They run about the whole *Roman* Empire, and farther than ever that extended. They pretend to no Eloquence, no polite Learning, no Arts of Inſinuation: But they preach a plain, honeſt, pious Doctrine; but withal ſuch a Doctrine, that as the Times then went, a man muſt expect to bid an everlaſting Adieu to all the Wealth, and Pleaſures, and Honours of this World, if he once embraced it. They declare to all people the Authority they had for the Preaching this Doctrine. They vouch our Lord Jeſus Chriſt as the Author of it, who *died* for the bearing Teſtimony to it; and *roſe again* for its Confirmation; and is now King of Heaven and Earth. And they ſhewed that they had an Authentick Commiſſion from Heaven for the doing all this; by ſpeaking the Language of every Country where they came, without ever being taught it; by curing all diſeaſed people that were brought to them; by diſpoſſeſſing Devils; by giving ſight to the blind; and making the lame to walk, and reſtoring dead Bodies to life.

All theſe wonderful things they did all the World over.

over. And what the Effects hereof were, was manifest every where, and continues manifest to this day.

The Gospel spread like Lightning in all places: And whereever it came, Pagan Idolatry was confounded: Till at last the whole *Roman* Empire was converted to the Religion of Jesus Christ. Converted it was by men naked and unassisted; without the least Encouragement at the first from the Secular Powers, nay, in contradiction to the severest Penalties that the Secular Powers could contrive or decree to hinder it.

We grant indeed, that many thousands of brave men did lose their Lives in this *Religious* War between our Lord Jesus Christ and the Devil (who was then the Prince of this World), and did patiently submit to Death, that they might assert the truth of our Saviour's Cause: But that was Christ's way of vanquishing the Devil: He did thus *break the Serpent's head*, while the Serpent *bruised his heel:* And he did at last by this way effectually break his Kingdom; as is visible and notorious even from that time to this day.

And now I Appeal to every one, Whether this, which is matter of Fact, and known to all men that look into the Histories of Time; and of which we at this day see and enjoy the happy Effects, in having the Christian Religion, not only received among us, but made a part of our National Constitution: I say, whether this be not a convincing Proof, both of the Truth of our *Religion*, and likewise of those *Scriptures* from whence we fetch it. Had

Had not the *Christian Religion* been true, how could these things have ever come to pass? Seeing it is utterly unconceivable, that without a Divine Power they could be effected. And sure none can suppose that God would exert his Power for the confirming of a Falshood.

And again; had not our *Scriptures* been true likewise, or had they been the Fictions of any designing men; how is it possible they should have given us an account of these things so long before they came to pass, and when there was so little appearance of their ever coming to pass? And yet all that I have now mentioned is plainly there set down, as foretold by our Saviour, and his Apostles: And not only those things, but a great many other remarkable Events are there also foretold, which have since been exactly made good.

I hope by what hath been said, it doth appear that we at this day have sufficient Arguments to oblige us to believe and adhere to the Religion of Jesus Christ, tho we never saw the *Original* Proofs he gave of it; which was the Point I was to make good. For I think I have shewed, That if those Proofs were good and conclusive at the first, to them that saw them, and were Witnesses of them; they are so to us now, who receive them upon their Testimony. And as for the difference that may be alledged in point of Evidence, between a man's *seeing* a thing, and receiving it upon the *Report* of others; all that, I think, by the account I have given, is in a great measure out of doors as to this matter. For the *Report* upon

upon which we receive the Gospel, being so Authentick, so unexceptionable, and likewise so confirmed by Matters of Fact still visible to us, it amounts to as strong a Proof, as if we had Evidence of Sense. And I do in my Conscience believe, that there is not a man in this Nation now stands out against the Religion of Jesus Christ, but who would have done so, if he had lived in the time of our Saviour, and heard him preach the Gospel.

As for us who believe, let us persevere in our Faith without wavering. Our Faith is never the worse for not *seeing*. *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.* And as for those that do not believe, their not *seeing* will be no excuse for them, if our Saviour may be Credited: For it was as well with respect to them that did not see, as to them that did, that he pronounced his Definitive Sentence, when he sent out his Apostles to Preach his Religion: *Go* (saith he) *and preach the Gospel to every creature: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*

God give us all Grace to consider the things that belong to our Everlasting Peace. That both all those who now oppose the *Truth as it is in Christ Jesus*, may be converted from the Error of their ways; and that all those who do own and profess it, may adorn the Doctrine of God which he hath called them to, by a pure, holy, and unblameable Life; to the Glory of God, and the Eternal Salvation of their Souls, in the Day of our Lord Jesus. *To whom*, &c.

*F I N I S.*

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